

A Plain and Familiar Discourse concerning GOVERNMENT. Wherein it is Debated, Whether Monarchy or a Common-wealth be best for the People.

THE Subject of this Discourse is *Gouvernement*: with an Enquiry, which is the best Form of it. I shall not amuse the Reader with curious far-fetched Notions; but deliver plain and easie Things. And such as are within all Mens knowledge, if they will but take the pains to consider them. Supposing therefore that a People were at full Liberty to choose a Government, the Question is, What kind of Government might be recommended to them, as the best for them? Whether a Kingdom, or a Common-wealth? Which the better to resolve, I must clear the way by a few Observations.

Observe first, That the Question is not, which of these Governments is simply and of it self the best; but which is best for Them: that is, for the People that are now to choose it, and that are to live in it or under it. It is the Actors themselves, and not the Spectators, that we desire to Content. And we know a Country Dance may be more pleasant to them that dance it, when perhaps a *French* Dance would please the Lookers on better. In our Plantations, where they have great Families to carry on their Work, one may see very plainly, that those Families that mostly consist of Slaves, are much more orderly, and carry on their Work much better, than those that consist of Free-men or hired Servants. But yet you shall never perswade these hired Servants to become Slaves. For it is better for Them to be as they are: and as it is their Masters Interest to have them his Slaves, and the Plantation would thereby produce and clear more: so it is Their Interest to continue Free-men. Nor must you tell them (out of *Hobbs*) that Slavery is a good Condition; for they know and see the contrary. Where a Common belongs to divers People, one may plainly see, and likewise may easily convince the People, that this Land might be managed to much more advantage, if it were in one mans hand. But will they therefore give up the Land to one man, and part with their Common? They will as soon part with their Eyes: it being clearly against their Interest. For tho it be never so untoward to have Land in common; yet they know it would be much worse for themselves, to be clearly shut out and to have nothing. Let me make one other Instance. A great number of Merchants (Authority concurring) joyn in a Company for carrying on a Trade like the *East-India* or *African* Company. And this Trade they manage by a Committee, or select Deputies, chosen from time to time by and out of their own whole number. There
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may be great Objections made against this way: and they may be told; that a single Person might manage the Affair much better. But they will answer, that in this matter they must consult their own Interest: which they think will be best secured, if they act themselves, or by their immediate Trustees. And since this single Person must be well paid for his pains, they had rather the Advantages he expects should be shared among themselves. This in a more especial manner will be the sense of the Chief among them: who are, or hope to be, of the Ruling Committee. And even those that cannot hope to be of it, will yet be well satisfied, that they shall have a hand in appointing those that are. They will therefore be hardly persuaded to put the power out of their own hands. And they will conclude, That it is more to their Advantage to take their own Management with all its faults, than to trust One man with all: tho perhaps he may do better for them, than they can do themselves. *Aristotle* affirms, that a good King is better than a Common-wealth: that is, as it must be understood, in it self, and in the Effects and Event. Because such a King may make swifter Advances, than any Common wealth can do. But surely it is a plain loss and prejudice to a People, who had the Government in their own hands, to have it taken from them, to be put into the best hand that ever was. As a single Person would be a great loser by being divested of the Government, tho it be given to One who will Govern much better. Thus tho it should be granted, that *Sultan Solymán* is a much better Prince than *Sultan Mahomet*, (as for any thing we can learn, there is not a pin to choose); yet 'tis a loss to *Mahomet* to be Deposed. He cannot Hunt as he did, nor have so many fair Women, nor strangle the *Bissa's* at his pleasure. and many other Advantages he now wants, which before he enjoyed. It appears therefore, that what is best in it self, may be worse for the People. For whatever Government is best in it self, it is plainly best for the people that the people Govern, or have the Government among themselves. We see however, that *Aristotle* had a great opinion of a good King. But, saith the same Author, a good King is so rarely to be found, and a bad one is so pernicious and destructive; that Wise men think it best to take up with the mediocrity of a Common-wealth.

Observe likewise, That the Question is not, Whether it be better to be under a King, or under a Common-wealth. For this is not worth the disputing. And the thing depends upon the disposition of those that Govern. There have been Tyrannical Kings, and there have been Tyrannical Republics: and there have been Kings and Republics that have been good to their Subjects. If we look upon the present Times, I think it cannot be said, that any of the Christian Kings now Ruling, give their Subjects cause to complain: the *French* and some *Italians* excepted. And as for the Republics; the *Suisses* have divers places under them by Conquest, some of which are subject to all the *Cantons*, and others to some of them: and they live in as good a condition, as the condition of Subjects can be. So likewise the *Dutch* have conquered some parts of *Brabant*, and other places: and the people there have fair Quarter. It is true,

true, they bear great Burdens, the necessities of the State requiring it ; but since they fare no worse than their Masters, it must be confest they are well used. And the great Confluence of Strangers to those Provinces, there to live and settle, is also a sign of a good and pleasing Government. Also we cannot find, but that the People of *Corfica* live easily and happily under the *Genoeses*. The *Venetians*, I confess, are accounted hard Masters. But they are not to compare with a certain Unchristian King ; whose Government is the greatest Oppression, that ever the World knew. There was never any Government in the World, that made so many people miserable. And it would amaze one to think, that so great, so brave, and so noble a Nation, should be brought under such horrid servitude, and made univertally such Drudges and Beggars. It is also very plain and evident, that the *Venetians* Government is much better and more pleasing than the Popes. Their Territories joyn : and are of equal goodness in themselves. But that of *Venice* is infinitely in better condition : which can be imputed to nothing else, but to their better Government. On the *Venetian* side, you see a Country well cultivated, and full of People, and every way flourishing and prosperous. But if you pass on into the Pope's Dominions, you see nothing there but desolation and beggery. Dr. Burnet, a very curious and judicious Observer, hath made this Observation : and all that Travel that way, cannot but observe the same. It is easily said, *Better one Master than many* ; and it may be said as easily, *Better one Landlord than many Landlords*. But yet we see, that Tenants for the most part live much easier under many Landlords, (I mean Colledges and Corporations), than under One. But (as I said before) the Question is not, which of these it is best to be under ; One or Many, a Kingdom or a Common-wealth : but the Question is, Whether it be better to be under a King, or of a Common-wealth. I suppose I need not labour to make it out, that to be under a Government, and of a Government, are two very different things. And whatever Inconveniencies may be fear'd or fancy'd in being under a Government, sure in being of it there cannot be so much danger. A Vessel of Water may crush that that is under it ; but the parts of that Water do not press one another, but lie all at ease. In a Monarchy the King is over all, and all others are his Subjects and Servants. And therefore who ever lives in a Monarchy, must be under it, except he be King. So likewise in an Oligarchy (which is an ill-ordered Common-wealth) where a few men engross the whole Power, excluding the rest ; those few men are over, and the rest are under. But in a well-ordered Common-wealth [wherein, tho it be an Aristocracy, and the Chief Men Govern (as indeed they ought) yet none are excluded ; and where those Chief Men rise by consent of the rest, and any one may come to be one of these Chief Men] ; in such a State, the common Liberty makes them all Peers, so that there is none under nor over. And since every one hath part of the Supreme Power, he is no more under another, than that other is under Him. Like Poles in a Copse, tho some are bigger and higher than others, yet none are over ; and their Heads or Tops do all stand clear. And as for the Common-wealth in general ; as it hath been said already, they are not under it but of it.

Observe also, that 'tis lost labour to talk to People of Liberty and Command, save only to those that are fit for them. and such are not every where to be found. for there are divers People of a servile disposition, that are cut out for Slavery, and for nothing else: *Genus hominum servituti natum*, as one says of them. And these are no way capable of a noble Condition, or so much as a noble Thought. Such kind of Cattel the *Cappadocians* were of old, in the lesser *Asia*: of whom *Strabo* tells us this Story: The People of *Cappadocia*, saith he, were for a long time under the Protection of the *Romans*; and were very faithful to them, both They and their Kings! But at last their King dying without Heirs, and the Royal Race being extinct, they sent to the Senate of *Rome* to provide them of a Government. After Consideration, the Senate return'd this Answer: That out of their great Good Will to the *Cappadocian* People, and for a reward of their Fidelity and constant Services; they would free them from the Yoke they had been under, and would make them a Free State. This did not please the *Cappadocians* at all. So they sent a second Message to signify, That they had been under Kings time out of mind, and desired so to continue: and plainly that they could not live without Kingly Government. Wherefore they humbly belought the Senate to give them a King. The Senate wonder'd they should be such beastly Fools, as to prefer Subjection before Liberty; but since it was their humour, they thought good to comply with it, and they did give them a King. This is the effect of the Story: which I apply thus. Where there is a People of this *Cappadocian* Wit and Spirit, it is as much in vain to recommend Liberty to them, as to Horses and Mules, or such other Beasts, whom Nature hath ordain'd for Service and Drudgery.

Moreover we must observe and consider, that to Men of Sense, nothing is sweeter than Liberty, nothing more harsh than to be under the Power of others. And they would never consent to this later, if meer Necessity did not drive them to it: there being no other way to secure themselves from violence. For unless they submitted to a common Power, that might protect them from one another as well as from Strangers, they must be in a perpetual State of War and Hostility, and every mans hand would be against every man. There is therefore an absolute necessity that there should be a Government. But yet Wise men do all they can, to keep the Staff in some measure in their own hands: and they will be very careful, how they let go, and where they place, this great Power: and they will rather keep it and cautiously distribute it among themselves; then give up all at once, irrevocably, to One Man and his Posterity.

These things are spoken, you will say, as if Government were founded upon the Peoples Consent. They are so; and all sober Men hold, that Government is so founded. In particular, the judicious *Hooker* saies expressly, That there is no lawful Power, but by the immediate Appointment of God, or the Consent of the People. That Republicks are establish'd upon Consent, is plain and evident. In Monarchies the thing is more obscure. and it must be confess'd, that

that most of them are primarily founded upon Force and Fraud. Though there is also a subsequent consent, when People dare not refuse to give it. As for Paternal Power, it is an Invention of *Laud's* Disciples: I mean the *Arminian* Clergy of *England*, who have been for these many years the great Promoters of Tyranny and Oppression. But in all the World beside, Paternal Power as to this purpose was never heard nor dream'd of. Nor is it indeed possible that this Power Paternal should be the Original of Government. For admitting that by the Law of Nature the Father hath absolute Power over his Children: yet when the Father dies, there's an end of Paternal Power. Unless you will say, that the Eldest Son hath then the like absolute Power over his Brothers and Sisters and his Mother likewise: which it is madness to affirm. But you must also affirm and maintain, that when the Eldest Son dies, the Heir of his Body (whether it be a Boy or a Girl) must have the same Power over the Uncles: which is a further Madness. Moreover even while the Father lives, his Reign hath many Weaknesses. First of all his Wife is subject to him as to a Husband, but not as to a Sovereign. And his Daughters are subject to him before they are Married, but not after. Also when he permits his Sons to Marry, he doth as good as bid them be Men of themselves; and be Fathers of Families, even as He is. And what Dominion can he claim over his Sons Wives? especially after their Husbands die, and they Marry elsewhere. Besides, if this Father have a Father, or an Elder Brother, or any Elder Branch of his Family; the Childrens Allegiance (according to this Doctrine) must be due to Them, and not to their own Father. Thus we see, that the Opinion that would make Paternal Power the Foundation of Government, has it self no Foundation.

Having now premised these Observations, we may now fall upon the principal Matter: which is to Enquire, whether Monarchy or a Commonwealth be better for the People. and which of these were to be prefer'd, if they had their free Choice. The People here meant, are the People of a great and large Country; which contains in it many lesser Countries, and many Cities. But to shorten the Business, and to make it easie and plain even to the meanest Capacities; let us consider, which of these two Governments were best for a City. For that which is best for a City, is best for a Countrey. I presume the Reader cannot but be sensible, that the very putting this Question decides the Matter. For it can be answer'd but one way. It being the voice of all Mankind, that for a City the Republican Form is best: that is, to be a Body Corporate, and to have the Government among themselves. Which is in effect, to be a Commonwealth. And therefore where-ever there are Liberties or Priviledges granted to a City, they chiefly consist in this, that the People be under the Form of a Republick. Which also makes the difference between a City and a Village. And this is done for the Encouragement of Trade. Which is of that mighty importance to a State, and so great an advancer of Wealth and Power, that Sovereigns think themselves much concern'd to encourage it. And they would not thus, every where, favour those that manage it (that is, the Cities) with settling them in the Form of Republicks;

licks; if they did not judge this Form to be most acceptable and beneficial to them.

But we will acknowledge that the World is mistaken in this Practice, if good Reasons can be brought against it. Let us therefore hear, what Arguments the admirers of Monarchy will use, to perswade a City to Monarchical Government.

They will say, it is a brave thing for One Man to Command All; and to have this Power to Him and his Heirs. I confess 'tis brave for Him that has it, but not for Them that are subject to it. Also whatever this Person be himself, his Heirs may be rash, or Fools, or Children, or as bad as bad can be.

They will say he will keep a Noble Court, and live at a great Expence. But these Expences must be maintained by the Labours and Miseries of the People.

They will say that a weak Prince may have a Wise Council. But who shall choose them? For surely the choosing a Wise Council, is a great point of Wisdom.

They will say that though a Prince be none of the best himself, yet he may hearken to good Advice. But who dares give it? For it is the Rule, never to give any advice to a Prince, nor let fall a word before him, but what shall be pleasing.

Though the Prince follow his Pleasures, say they, yet he may have those under him that will take care of his Business. But the Princes Business is another Mans Business, and they will intend it accordingly. Whereas in a Commonwealth, Men in Publick Business intend it as if it were their own. For indeed it is so.

They will talk much of the Pomp and splendor of Monarchy. But wise Men prefer a Government that feels well, before One that shews well. And withal a Republick may be so ordered, as to have very fine shews to please Fools.

They will reply and say, that nothing can compare with the Glories of a Crowned Head. But whoever wears the Crown, 'tis more than an even Wager, that Priests or Whores will sway the Scepter.

A Prince, they will tell us, must have a numerous Household: and 'twill be a fine Preferment to be his Servants. But those Services will be hard to get: and 'tis mean and base to be Servant to any man: and Kings Servants are the greatest Slaves in Nature. In the Politick Warehouse in *Parnassus*, *Boccalini* relates, there were amongst other things most curious Packsaddles. One ask'd the meaning of those fine things, and what they were for. He was told they were for Courtiers backs: who could never bear the hard Servitude they were under, if they had not very curious Packsaddles.

However, they will say, 'tis a brave thing to have the Princes Favour. But then 'tis as sad to lose it: and withal 'tis very slippery, and soon lost. Also it is commonly gotten by base Arts: more especially by serving the Princes Vices. If he love Wine, they must drink with him: if he love Drolling, they must turn Buffoons: if he love Women, they must be Pimps and Panders: if he love Money, they must be his *Empsons* and *Dudleys*: and if he love Blood, they must be his Blood-hounds. Moreover the grossest and most impudent Flatterers, are the most perfect Courtiers.

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They will say a Prince may be assisted by able Ministers. But these will mind nothing but feathering their own Nests, and will buy and sell their Master. They apply themselves, above all other Men, to make Hay while the Sun shines.

A Prince, say they, can not see every thing himself, and therefore will find mean to be inform'd by others. But he shall not hear a true word in a years time.

They will give us great Assurances, that the Prince will be kind to us if we deserve it. But we had rather not need his kindness, and be in condition to be kind to Our selves.

They will promise that the Prince shall use us well. But 'tis sad to consider, that he may use us ill.

The good Example of a King will do much good. But his bad Example will do more hurt. For more will follow the bad Examples: which also come oftener.

'Tis a Kings Duty (they will say) and likewise his advantage, to promote the Publick Interest. But he hath commonly By-Interests of his own: which thwart the Publick, and which are dearer to him.

They will avow, that 'tis the perfection of Monarchy to have the King absolute. Yet if this do not please, it may be so temper'd, that the People may have great Liberties even under a King. But who ever stands up for these Liberties is in great danger to be ruin'd; and whoever helps to beat them down, or undermines them, or betrays them, is in the way to Preferment. Such a Government is a Wrestling Match between the King and the People. If He throw Them, he will crush them to dirt; if They throw Him, they must cry him mercy, and be sorry they hurt him, and help him up again.

They will say also, that to the common People Monarchy and a Commonwealth are little different. For 'tis the subordinate Magistrates that the People are most concern'd with, being immediately govern'd by them: and these must be in a Commonwealth, as well as in a Monarchy. But in a Commonwealth they are chosen by Our Selves, in a Monarchy they are imposed upon us. Whence it follows, that in a Commonwealth we are always govern'd by those we love; but too often in a Monarchy by those we hate, and who consequently hate Us: for Hatred is seldom lost. Which Condition is mention'd in Scripture, as one of the greatest of Curses. *They that hated them, ruled over them.*

Many other fine Arguments may be offer'd to the People of a City, to induce than to set up Monarchy. But the thing is so uncouth, and so much against the hair, that they will never be perswaded to it. If they should, what sad work would it make. Suppose the City of London should have a Prince, or an Hereditary Lord Mayor with Regal Power: This Mayor dies: and his Son, a young Spark, comes in his place: with Favourites and Companions as grave as himself. Who, as young as they are, can help him to sing *Old Rose*. * And these Gallants must have the Publick Stock and Revenue at their Command: and must put in, and kick out, all Officers and Magistrates at their pleasure. Were not the City like to be bravely Govern'd? Here perhaps you will say, that the Government of the City is a thing that requires Personal Abilities: and therefore none must have it, but those that are fit for it. And doth not the Government of a Nation require the same? But

...it will be said, that while we have gone upon a mistaken
...that what is good for a City is good for a Country. Which is not so
...it be granted, that the Republican or Corporation way is best for a Ci-
...yet for a large Country it is not proper: in regard the People of a large
Country cannot so easily and conveniently Assemble, as those of a City can.
For answer to this, I do acknowledge, that if the Collective Body of the People
were to Govern, such a Government were not proper nor practicable for a great
Country, for the reason before given. But this is a bad sort of a Common-
wealth, and is not fit to be recommended to a People. It is as bad on the one
hand, for the Multitude to Govern; as it is on the other hand, for a few to
Govern excluding the rest. But surely if they go the Representative way, and
there place the Power; an equal Representative may with as much ease and
convenience be drawn out of a whole Country, as out of a single City; at least
the difference is not worth the speaking of. A Representative Common-wealth
may be as wide as the World. And this sort of Government some dare recom-
mend; and it recommends it self. This, if it be rightly order'd, is the true
Aristocracy; which word imports the Government of the best, and the thing
imports the best of Governments: there is none to compare with it. Even
Hobbs himself, the greatest Champion of Monarchy, after he hath, in his Book
De Cive, brought several Arguments to prove Monarchy better than a Com-
mon-wealth, (which yet he confesses are not Demonstrations, of which he saies
the rest of his Book consists); he bids the Reader take notice, that he hath
disputed all this while against Democracy; for as for Aristocracy, he hath no-
thing to say against it.

This is the Government, in which the most substantial Men (both for Parts and Estate) rise by
...and ascending as they believe themselves, from the lesser to the greater Dignities. And
this is the Government, in which Goodness is the way to Greatness. 'Tis not the niggardly Miser,
nor the prodigal Fool, nor the conceited Humorist, nor the proud and insolent, nor the cruel
Oppressor, nor the debauch'd Scoundrel; but the Discreet, the Courteous, the Generous, the In-
dustrious, the Vertuous; that must hope to be prefer'd in such a Government. Here gallant Acti-
ons of every kind are sure to be rewarded: and gallant Men are the only Favourites and Minions.
And men do not here come creeping, and crouching, and fawning, and waiting, like a Spaniel for
a Bone, (which must be done in Monarchies, or there can be nothing gotten); but like honorable
Sailors, they Court their great Lady and Mistress openly and bravely: and take all noble occasions
to shew themselves and put themselves forward, that She may see and know how well they deserve
her favor. Such a Government as this, would put Spirit and Mettal into the stillest Souls.

A Common-wealth is look't upon by many, as a strange, remote, unknown thing. Whereas
we see it every day, in our Cities and Towns Corporate. For these, as it hath been already
said, are really Common-wealths; and if the Kingdom were cast into the like Form, it would
be a Kingdom Corporate. Yet divers that are of Corporations, and there taste the sweetness of
being in a Community, do hate the very notion of a Common-wealth. When a Common-wealth
is a Corporation, I must say again, are but one and the same Thing under two different Names.
The real difference, that which is in these small Common-wealths (and which al-
ways but is inordinat) all things are mean and humble; in a great and Sovereign Republique all
things would be great and Noble. Even the Lord Mayor of London is but a petty Officer: in com-
parison whereof Lord Mayor or Chief Magistrate of England would be. Where also the Ruling
Body would be a Grand Court of Aldermen; and the whole Representatives, a Grand Common

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